



H.R. 5511 – Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel Remediation Act of 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 5511 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Doug Lamborn (R-CO) on February 28, 2008. The House Committee on Natural Resources agreed to the resolution by unanimous consent on May 22, 2008.

H.R. 5511 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on June 17, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 5511 amends the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-575), which requires construction of a water treatment plant to treat water runoff from the Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel in Colorado. The Tunnel is owned by the Federal government.

The bill specifically directs the Secretary of the Interior to implement a remedy for the site by treating water behind any blockage or bulkhead in the Tunnel, and to maintain the mine pool behind such blockage or bulkhead at a level that precludes surface runoff and minimizes the potential for Tunnel failure due to excessive water pressure.

This legislation also requires the Secretary of the Interior to take steps to repair and maintain the Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel's structural integrity.

BACKGROUND

The Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel carries water from old mines in Leadville, Colorado to a water treatment plant. Currently, the Bureau of Reclamation is responsible for the tunnel and treatment plant, while the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for cleaning up the area around the mines. There is concern that a blockage in the Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel could give way, releasing a flood of water and debris that has built up in the tunnel.

The Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-575) gave the Bureau of Reclamation authority to treat water from the Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel. H.R. 5511 clarifies that the Bureau of Reclamation has the authority to treat water pooling up behind the blockage. This bill also directs the agency to work jointly with the EPA on a remedy for this tunnel.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that implementing H.R. 5511 would cost \$90 million over the 2009-2013 period. [Full CBO Cost Estimate](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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